United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Peace agreement reached on El Salvador at Headquarters on December 31; new Secretary-General asks Mr Alvaro de Soto to continue in his functions as his Personal Representative for the Central American peace process.

- First day in office for new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali.

- UN owed over $800 million for regular budget and peacekeeping operations as of 31 December.

- Major de-mining effort for Cambodia urged by outgoing Secretary-General.

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On the night of 31 December, the representatives of the Salvadorian Government, led by President Alfredo Cristiani, and the representatives of el Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) reached an agreement on 31 December at UN Headquarters in New York which should bring into effect an official ceasefire in that country on 1 February.

The ceasefire accord is expected to bring about an end to the 12-year conflict in El Salvador, which has claimed approximately 75,000 lives.

In a press conference held at Headquarters today, Secretary-General's Personal Representative to the peace talks, Alvaro de Soto, indicated that eight substantive agreements had been attached to the main peace agreement between the parties, relating in particular to the armed forces, the national civil police, the economic and social issues, including the land issues, political participation by the FMLN from the ceasefire time onwards and the judiciary system.

The parties are scheduled to meet again on 5 January, according to Mr de Soto, with the view to attempting to reach an agreement on two remaining aspects, namely a calendar for implementation of the agreement, and its specific modalities et mechanisms. If the parties were unable to reach an agreement, they were committed to accepting the formula on the pending matters

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submitted to them by the Secretary-General on 14 January. The formal signature of the "final peace agreements" is scheduled for 16 January in Mexico City.

Mr de Soto also said that the presence of President Cristiani of El Salvador had helped to facilitate the agreement, as had the personal contribution to the talks of outgoing Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, and the presence of the Ambassadors of the so-called Four Friends of the Secretary-General - namely Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Spain - and of the US Ambassador and a number of senior officials from the State Department.

The implementation of the peace agreement will require strong financial support from the international community, especially for the reconstruction efforts, concluded Mr de Soto.

In a related development, a United Nations Spokesman said today that new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali had been briefed by Mr de Soto on the developments related to the signing of the peace agreement. Following the briefing, the Secretary-General asked Mr de Soto to continue in his functions as his Personal Representative for the Central American peace process, specifically carrying through on the remaining responsibilities regarding El Salvador.

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In his first day in office, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali expressed his eagerness to cooperate for the creating of a new momentum in the work of the United Nations and his hope that "this momentum will help us to play a more important role in the peacekeeping, peacebuilding and in economic-social cooperation, and, above all, defending human rights and the democratic institutions all over the world".

The Secretary-General made these remarks at a brief meeting held with the seni
or officials of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General also met today with the representatives of nine Member States that made early payment of their 1992 assessed contributions.

In a related development, a United Nations Spokesman indicated today that the Secretary-General was scheduled to fly to Cairo over the weekend for a short visit, before returning to New York.

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The United Nations is owed over $800 million in uncollected payments from Member States for both regular and peacekeeping operations as of 31 December 1991. Of that amount, $439.4 million were owed by 85 Member States for the regular budget of the Organization at the end of 1991, while an additional $377.2 million was outstanding for peacekeeping.

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Meanwhile, all Member States have been notified of their assessments for 1992, totalling $1.04 billion. Nine countries - Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden - fully paid today their assessed contributions for the current year.

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In light of the growing sense in the international community for the need to undertake, on an urgent basis, a major de-mining effort in Cambodia, it was suggested that such a programme begin even before the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

In a report of 30 December, the outgoing Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, indicated that he had decided accordingly to recommend to the Security Council that the mandate of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) be expanded to include training in mine clearance and the initiation of a de-mining programme, including the training of Cambodian personnel in mine detection and mine clearance. This programme, said Mr Pérez de Cuéllar, would be concentrated in the northwestern part of Cambodia and would give priority, in consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to repatriation routes, reception centres and areas where refugees and displaced persons will be resettled.

The report estimates that the military personnel totalling approximately 1,000 and provided by Member States, would be made up of about 40 members of a planning and liaison unit based at UNAMIC headquarters, an engineer unit of about 700, expert training and supervisory teams of about 200 and 150 logistic support personnel.

Mr Pérez de Cuéllar stated however that, in view of the present financial situation of the Organization, it was not possible to undertake the activities proposed in the report until the necessary cash resources became available.

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